

Manual MA Program New Media & Digital Culture

Last revised by Imar de Vries, 31-01-2016
[coordinator addresses]

1. Please first see

Faculty Master's website: <http://www.uu.nl/masters/en/new-media-digital-culture>

2. Coursework (30 ECTS)

- 1) In the first two academic blocks you take four courses from those on offer from the MA New Media & Digital Culture program. Requests to take courses elsewhere must be presented to the MA coordinators, René Glas (R.Glas@uu.nl) and Ingrid Hoofd (I.M.Hoofd@uu.nl).
- 2) The MA coordinators will act as your supervisors during the first block of coursework. At the end of block 1 / starting block 2, you will be appointed an individual supervisor, based on your preferences for specific research areas and staff availability. This individual supervisor will supervise and assess you in the second half of your Masters. With your supervisor, you will discuss this NMDC Manual and establish mutual expectations in terms of availability, manner of feedback, and evaluation. Not every supervisor is or works the same way, so be sure that these agreements are clear at an early stage. Should problems arise with your supervisor, you are advised to contact the MA coordinators.
- 3) You may only start the individual trajectory (see section 3 below) once you have successfully completed *Doing New Media Studies* (MCMV14004) plus at least *two* other NMDC MA courses. If after the first semester you have not passed three or more courses, the MA coordinators will contact you to talk about whether the program is the right fit for you.

3. Individual trajectory (30 ECTS)

In the second set of two academic blocks you will work independently, under supervision of your supervisor. Please make sure you plan this phase carefully; if you exceed the given time allotment by more than six months the MA coordinators will be notified and supervision could be stopped.

In this individual trajectory, which consists of the *Research internship* and the *MA thesis*, the focus is always on various ways of carrying out independent academic research:

- during your internship, this entails carrying out research embedded in the practical duties and producing an empirical report of your findings;
- in the MA thesis, this entails deeper engagement with – and further reflection on – the NMDC field of research in the form of a literature survey, a formulation of a research question, and a suitable research methodology.

Both components are described in detail below.

Research internship (15 ECTS, code: MCMV10016)

Title in the course catalogue and study guide: THE-Research Internship/ MA NMDC

- 1) You can find internship positions via the internship offerings on the NMDC website (see www.newmediastudies.nl/jobs-and-internships), via the general internship site of the faculty (www.hum.uu.nl/stage), via Mediastages (www.media-stages.nl), via VillaMedia (<http://www.villamedia.nl/n/vacatures.shtm>), via your supervisor or via other avenues. Let your choice be guided by your work interests as well as your research interests, and bear in mind that an internship of at least 15 ECTS requires a time investment of approximately three months full time.

2) As soon as you have found an internship position, you need to prepare an Internship Agreement and a Work Plan, the forms for which you can download at <http://students.uu.nl/en/hum/nmdc/study-programme-2016-2017/internships>. Your work plan should consist of the filled out Internship Work Plan Form and a content section, which must contain all of the elements stated in the Internship Guidelines (for the exact details, please see http://students.uu.nl/sites/default/files/hum_internship_regulations_2015.pdf):

- Name, student number, supervisor, name of your mentor at the internship position, their address, telephone number and email address (if available), plus the total length of the internship;
- A justification of the choice of internship and the learning goals you would like to achieve;
- A description of your research proposal, which clearly states the kind of academically relevant question you would like to answer, and with what theory, method(s) and sources;
- A description of the content and time frame of the work to be carried out, both the practical as well as the research related aspects;
- Agreements about the nature and intensity of supervision, both from the internship institution and from your supervisor.

Once all has been approved and signed, turn the entire dossier in at the Student Desk Humanities (“Studiepunt”) at Drift 8 and you will be automatically registered for the research internship.

- 3) What you do during the research internship consists, by definition, of two parts: practical duties and research activities. The practical duties consist of the work that the organisation took you on for: editorial work, advice, logistics, etc. Usually this results in delivering a specific product (report, website). Concurrently with these duties, you carry out *academic research* that is *embedded* in your specific work environment. In an ideal scenario the practical duties and research activities will overlap one-for-one; that is, when your internship mentor asks you to conduct academic research for them. In most cases however, the two activities do not overlap as easily, which means that in your planning and approach you should bear both assignments in mind. Make sure that both the practical duties and research activities (questions and methods) are described in your internship plan of work. Your supervisor must approve this plan before you can start!
- 4) Your research internship report needs to be a description and reporting of your *research*. Evaluative attention to the practical duties – including, where applicable, (a summary of) the products delivered – can of course be integrated into the research report, or you can include it in an appendix or in the introduction. It should be clear that no two internship research reports are alike; the final form of your report will be the result of choices you make in consultation with your supervisor. In terms of size, you should think of around 8000 words (not including additional internship products). You will further write about 300 words of academic reflection on the internship and your research findings and post this on newmediastudies.nl.
- 5) Your supervisor will in most cases visit you at your workplace at the start or at the end of your internship to discuss the setup or the evaluation of your internship with you and your mentor. The final evaluation of your internship will take place on the bases of these discussions, the evaluation form filled in by your mentor, and of course the quality of your internship research report.

MA Thesis (15 ECTS, code: MCMV10009)

Title in the course catalogue and study guide: THE-Masterthesis/ MA NMDC

Introduction

Definition

A Master's thesis is an academic report of a scientific investigation that has a clearly formulated research question or problem as its starting point.

- Size: some 10,000 words, depending on the nature of the research (not counting notes, title page, list of illustrations, transcriptions, and bibliography). Larger theses have to be approved in advance by the student's thesis supervisor

- Number of ECTS: 15 credits. The thesis must be completed within one block (full time); approval of extension (a rare exception!) has been obtained in advance from the thesis supervisor and the MA program coordinator
- Formal requirements: the thesis must be written according to the general rules and methods as they are accepted in the appropriate academic field of research.

Aim

In the Master's thesis the student demonstrates that she possesses the ability to:

1. design, with partial guidance by a thesis supervisor, a 15 ECTS (= 420 hours) research project by
 - formulating, analyzing and evaluating issues and problems within the student's academic field
 - setting up a research concept that adheres to the guidelines of the Master's program
2. carry out largely independent research on the topic described in the approved research concept
3. report about this research at a level that complies with generally accepted disciplinary norms

Contents

A thesis contains the following elements:

1. a research question or formulation of a problem
2. a critical description of the academic current state of affairs with regards to the chosen question or problem, based on relevant literature and other sources
3. a critical justification of why particular theoretical and/or historiographical frameworks and sources have been chosen
4. a description and motivation of the chosen research method(s)
5. an extended argument through which the research material is analyzed in a clear, logical, and convincing manner with reference to the original research question or problem
6. a conclusion of which the central focus is an answer to the original research question or problem plus a critical reflection on the outcomes and chosen methods, and which includes suggestions for further research
7. foot- or endnotes that comply with international conventions
8. a bibliography that complies with international conventions
9. if applicable: a list of images and/or other audiovisual material used in the thesis

Supervision and writing

The student writes the thesis under the supervision of a member of the academic staff in the chosen field of study, someone who possesses relevant expertise to guide the student and is authorized for examination. The MA program coordinator will initiate the supervisor assignment process after the student has successfully completed two MA courses. In addition, the MA program coordinator will at a later stage assign a 'second reader', someone who is not involved in supervision but will grade the research proposal and final thesis. If the student experiences the supervision process as problematic, the student may contact the student advisor or the coordinator of the appropriate MA program.

Thesis preparations

- after the supervisor has been assigned, the student makes an appointment to discuss this manual, to present her initial ideas about the thesis, and to agree upon mutual expectations in terms of availability, manner of feedback, and preparatory schedules (reading and writing). Not every supervisor is or works the same way, so be sure that these agreements are clear at an early stage
- in the week before the thesis block the student starts thinking and working on a preliminary research proposal (see *Research proposal guidelines* below); in the first block week she hands in this proposal with her supervisor for feedback
- in the second week of the thesis block the student presents her final research proposal in an oral exam. This is to be considered a public defense of the research proposal, where the student demonstrates her knowledge (vocabulary, repertoire and discourse) of the field of New Media & Digital Culture. After the presentation the supervisor and second reader assess the proposal according to the proposal guidelines, and, in case of a satisfactory result, give the student formal permission to

proceed. If the student needs to rewrite certain aspects of the proposal, she will receive feedback on what those aspects are, and will be asked to hand the proposal again. After final approval, all parties involved sign both the *Plagiarism Rules Awareness Statement* (a copy of which can be obtained at http://www.newmediastudies.nl/pdf/Plagiarism_declaration.pdf) and the *Humanities Thesis Protocol* (see http://students.uu.nl/sites/default/files/gw_nmdc_thesis_protocol.pdf).

Research proposal guidelines

- a *brief introduction* to the subject, including a justification of its relevance
- a clearly formulated *research question/problem* and a number of additional *sub questions*
- a presentation of a *preliminary literature survey* (working bibliography), consisting of at least 15 academic titles/references of which at least five will have to be presented in reading analyses (circa 600 words each) that discuss their academic and argumentative relevance
- a description of the proposed *theoretical framework* as it relates to the research question (e.g. fundamental concepts, central arguments, key authors, and relevant theoretical traditions)
- a description of the proposed *research method* as it relates to the research question, including methodological literature (handbooks, key examples of use) and a discussion of its strengths and weaknesses
- a substantiated indication of the *envisioned/projected research material* and of the considerations that play a role in determining and limiting it (how much, how long, what and why, and what not), taking into account the accessibility of the prospective material

Timetable

Block week	Preparation	Goal of discussion/meeting with supervisor
Week -1	Start thinking/writing on preliminary research proposal	
Week 1	Hand in preliminary research proposal	Process feedback on preliminary research proposal
Week 2	Hand in final research proposal	Present and discuss final research proposal
Week 4	Hand in draft version of theoretical-methodological chapter	Discuss and process feedback on draft version of theoretical-methodological chapter
Week 5	Hand in final version of theoretical-methodological chapter	Discuss final version of theoretical-methodological chapter
Week 8-9	Hand in draft version of thesis	Discuss draft version of thesis
End of block	Hand in final version of thesis	

During the summer holidays the student is not entitled to supervision. This means that in order to benefit fully from supervision feedback the final version of the thesis should ideally be near completion on 15 June. The final possibility to hand in a thesis in time for graduation during the active academic year is 15 August, but be aware that this generally will be a version that has received little additional feedback.

Assessment of final thesis and resits

At the end of the allotted time to write the thesis it will be assessed for grading. It is the student's responsibility to deliver digital and hard copies to her supervisor and second reader. Both the supervisor and the second reader complete an *MA thesis assessment form* within ten workdays and make a proposal for a final grade, which is sent to the MA program coordinator for approval. If this final grade is a 6.0 or a 6.5 the thesis will, in compliance with the *Faculty Guideline Borderline Cases* [Facultaire Richtlijn Grensgevallen], have to be assessed for additional approval by one of the Full Professors in the study program; this will take another ten workdays. The supervisor or coordinator will register the final grade in *Osiris* and send the completed and signed assessment form to the Humanities Student Administration (an email copy will be sent to the student). If the thesis received a passing grade the student is then eligible to upload the thesis to *Igitur*.

If the thesis did not receive a passing grade, or if the Full Professor did not approve of a 6.0 or a 6.5, the student is entitled to take a resit, provided the final grade was not lower than a 4.0. The resit period starts with a detailed discussion of the final version of the thesis, and, as a rule, is thereafter allowed to take up to four weeks (special rules apply for summer holidays, see the *Timetable* comments above). The assessment procedure of the rewritten thesis follows the same ten workdays and protocols as described in the previous paragraph. If after the rewriting process the thesis is still considered of insufficient quality (i.e., the supervisor and/or the second reader again award it a failing grade, or the Full Professor does not approve of a 6.0 or a 6.5), a failing grade will again be registered in *Osiris*. In consultation with the MA program coordinator the student can then start the following block anew with the thesis process, possibly under the guidance of an other supervisor.

Assessment criteria

The thesis will be assessed by the supervisor and second reader by filling in the *MA Thesis Assessment Form* (see http://www.newmediastudies.nl/pdf/MA_Thesis_Assessment_Form.pdf). The first part of this form lists a number of formal requirements that *all* need to be met in order to receive a grade (declaration of acquaintance with the regulations for plagiarism; correct use of language; table of contents and summary; annotation, bibliography, style and form according to the formal guidelines of the discipline/programme). A detailed description of how the grade is composed is given in the second part of the form, and covers the following aspects: 1. research question/problem; 2. academic relevance; 3. theoretical framework; 4. methodology (*); 5. analysis; 6. conclusion; 7. sources and bibliography; 8. argumentative structure; 9. readability and style; 10. autonomy. Each aspect lists a small amount of questions that guide assessment (is the research problem clearly described in the introduction? do the sub questions logically follow from the main question? has the method been explained thoroughly? et cetera) and is ultimately graded on an insufficient/sufficient/good scale. Based on all aspect assessments the supervisor and second reader then propose a final grade on a 1-10 scale. Conforming to Faculty guidelines covering minimum fail/pass criteria, a thesis fails if it is given one or more insufficient grades on aspects 1 through 7. Compensation of insufficient grades is only possible in aspects 8 through 10.

(*) The description of the methodological approach should tick off the following six boxes:

- 1) name the method(s) used
- 2) give a (short) explanation of how the method(s) work(s)
- 3) refer to literature that explains or uses the chosen method(s)
- 4) briefly reflect upon the method(s): what can it/they reveal, and what not
- 5) explain how the method(s) help(s) structure the thesis (this should then be visible in the rest of the thesis)
- 6) in the conclusion, return to the methodological choices made in the introductory chapter and say something about their usefulness and effect on the research process and findings

5. Time frame

Below you will find a table that shows per cohort when you will need to *complete* specific aspects of the MA in order to graduate. Please take note that these dates are approximate and that exact dates are usually set a month in advance. If you do not make the deadlines outlined here, this will have consequences for the amount of time your supervisor can allocate to supervision. The final responsibility to complete within one year lies with the student; it is possible if you work hard for it!

	Class of September	Class of February
First two MA courses finished	End block 1 (start of November)	End block 3 (mid April)
Supervisor assigned, first meeting	Mid November	End of April
Start looking for an internship	November/December	May/August
Second two MA courses finished	End block 2 (start of February)	End block 4 (end June)
Start internship	Start/Mid February	Start of September
Internship work plan	End February	Mid September
Internship final research report	Start of May	Start of November
MA thesis plan & oral exam	Start of May	Start of November
Oral exam for back markers	September	February
MA thesis (version to be graded)	Mid/End June (or 15 August)	Start of February

6. Exam dossiers and graduation

See <http://students.uu.nl/en/hum/nmdc/practical-information/graduation> for an overview of the regulations and deadlines for graduation exams.